

PAUL LEGISLATION CRITICAL TO VICTORY FOR ARMED PILOTS

Washington, DC: Congressman Ron Paul joined more than 300 of his House colleagues voting to pass an armed pilots bill yesterday, marking a victory for both American pilots and the flying public. Yesterday's vote followed months of intense efforts by Paul, other pro-gun legislators in Congress, and thousands of grassroots gun rights activists across the country.

"I'm gratified that the House finally passed an armed pilots bill," Paul stated. "I'm just troubled that Congress left pilots and air passengers defenseless for these many months since September 11th. There is no rational argument whatsoever for banning guns in the cockpit, and the men and women who pilot our incredibly complex modern planes surely can handle simple handguns. No amount of security can guarantee that a terrorist never again boards a flight with a weapon, so pilots must be armed as a last line of defense. Pilots and the traveling public overwhelmingly favor guns in the cockpit, and yesterday's vote is a strong step in the right direction."

Although the bill originally restricted the number of pilots who could carry guns, successful amendments offered by Paul and other members greatly strengthened the new program by eliminating the restriction.

Paul and other pro-gun legislators also successfully eliminated a provision in the bill that would have allowed the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to review- and possibly end- the armed pilots program in two years. "TSA director McGaw and Transportation secretary Mineta are openly anti-gun and hostile to the idea of arming pilots," Paul stated. "We should not leave them with any discretion to act as self-appointed legislators and thwart the clear intent of Congress."

"The recent incident at the El Al ticket counter in Lost Angeles demonstrates the effectiveness of private security," Paul concluded. "The armed El Al security agents acted quickly and prevented a much greater tragedy. If the Los Angeles madman had chosen a defenseless

domestic airline, police might have been hundreds of yards away. More lives would have been lost, maybe far more in a crowded airport. El Al also arms its pilots, who ironically enjoy greater gun rights than our own domestic pilots who should be protected by the Second amendment! Armed private citizens and private security are the best defense against crime and terror, and it's time the federal government allows U.S. airlines the same right to self-defense that El Al enjoys."